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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MARCH 24, 2009

SUMMARY: Reports on national political developments dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. All newspapers front-paged reports and photographs of a suicide attack in capital Islamabad where a "police guard foiled bid to blow up police headquarter." President Zardari's remarks made during an interview with Sky News urging the "United States and UK to do more to help his government fight terrorism" received prominent coverage. All dailies ran reports that "President Obama is seeking clear exit strategy from Afghanistan." All dailies gave extensive coverage to the interview of U.S. CENTCOM adviser David Kilecullen to Washington Post declaring that "Pakistani state could collapse in six months if immediate steps are not taken." Pakistan Foreign Minister Qureshi's remarks urging the "U.S. to engage Taliban in talks" also figured prominently.

Most major dailies ran editorials on the current political situation in the country. Some editorialists also commented on the forthcoming U.S. Af-Pak policy and the continued drone attacks in Pakistan. The English daily, "The Nation," noted that "when it comes to blaming Pakistan for not doing enough to contain the growing militancy, Britain and the U.S. seem to be on the same page." The Urdu daily, "Khabrain," wrote: "Thirty-six drone attacks in the last six months signify that the U.S. does not respect our borders. This situation demands a review of our policy in the war on terror." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Guard Foils Bid To Blow Up Police HQ" "Dawn" (03/24)

"A police constable was killed and four other people were injured in a suicide blast at the gate of police's Special Branch headquarters near G-7 Markez on Monday. The boom resounded through a vast area, sparking panic in the city. It was the first such attack in the federal capital in four months."

"Zardari Urges U.S., UK To Do More" "Dawn" (03/24)

"President Asif Ali Zardari urged Britain and the United States on Monday to do more to help his government fight terrorism and insisted he would not allow militancy to take over in Pakistan. He said his Pakistan People's Party had brought democracy to the country after eight years under the military rule of General Pervez Musharraf, and the international community should now play its part."

"Obama Seeking Clear Exit Strategy From Afghanistan" "Dawn" (03/24)

"U.S. President Barack Obama has said that he wants a clear "exit strategy" from Afghanistan and a diplomatic engagement with Pakistan as his administration prepares to announce its new strategy for the two countries. Mr. Obama's stress on the need for an exit strategy for U.S. troops from Afghanistan comes as he prepares to pour an extra 17,000 soldiers into the country."

"Pakistan Could Collapse In Six Months: Kilcullen" "The News" (03/24)

"The Pakistani state could collapse within six months if immediate steps are not taken to remedy the situation, warned a top adviser to the U.S. Central Command. David Kilcullen, who advises CENTCOM commander Gen. David H. Petraeus on the war on terror, urged U.S. policymakers to focus their attention on Pakistan as a failure there could have devastating consequences for the entire international community."

"U.S. Calls For Culture Of Tolerance In Pakistan" "Dawn" (03/24)

"The Obama administration's new strategy for Pakistan not only seeks a greater U.S. engagement with the country but also tries to redefine its relations with neighboring countries, a senior State Department official said on Monday while outlining salient features of the policy at a Washington think-tank. Recent statements by other U.S. officials also show that the new strategy envisages Pakistan as a Muslim democratic state but recognizes the army as a key player in the country's domestic affairs."

"Qureshi Asks U.S. To Engage Taliban In Talks" "The News" (03/24)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has called upon the U.S. to engage Taliban's in talks and denied that Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) supports militants now."

"Quetta Is Taliban's Head Quarters, Says Holbrooke" "The Nation" (03/24)

"U.S. special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrook has said that Pakistan's city Quetta appears to be Taliban's headquarter. In an interview to BBC on Monday, Holbrooke made it clear that "the number one problem" in stabilizing Afghanistan were the Taliban sanctuaries in western Pakistan, including the tribal areas along the Afghan border and cities like Quetta."

"U.S. Asks India To Support Pakistan Against Extremists" "The Nation" (03/24)

"The United States called Monday on India to support rival Pakistan in rooting out extremism as Washington drafts a new 'war on terror' strategy in South Asia."

"TTP Asks Polio Teams To Leave Lower Dir" "The News" (03/24)

"Armed activists of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have asked polio vaccination teams to leave Lower Dir area forthwith. The activists of the TTP captured drugs and other items and sealed population welfare department of the Qambar Maidan area."

"Taliban Kill U.S. Spy In North Waziristan" "Daily Times" (03/24)

"The Taliban killed a tribesman in North Waziristan Agency on Monday accusing him of spying for the United States."

"Baitullah's Squad Out To Hit Cities" "Dawn" (03/24)

"Security was tightened across the country on Monday after intelligence agencies warned that Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud has dispatched 20 foreign militants, mostly Uzbeks, to carry out terror strikes in major cities. A senior police official said agencies had warned police that the terrorists had left for Bannu on their way to Islamabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi and other major cities."

"Eighth Girls' School Bombed In Mardan District" "The News" (03/24)

"The bombing of the Government Girls' Higher Secondary School in the Hathian village in Mardan on Sunday night was the latest in the growing attacks on girls' educational institutions in the district."

The bombing partially damaged the boundary wall and two rooms of the girls' school."

"Kasab Seeks Lawyer As Mumbai Trial Begins" "Dawn" (03/24)

"Sometimes breaking into laughter, the man accused of being the lone surviving gunman in last year's Mumbai attacks told an Indian court on Monday that he was from Pakistan and wanted legal assistance, officials said."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Drone Attacks: Need To Review Foreign Policy," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (03/24)

"Thirty-six drone attacks in the last six months signify that the U.S. does not respect our borders. This situation demands a review of our policy in the war on terror. The parliament must be taken into confidence on the matter."

"A Wild Region," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/24)

". . . Prime Minister Gordon Brown has warned in his article published in The Observer that Al-Qaeda, whose core has shifted from Afghanistan to Pakistan, remains the biggest security threat to his country. And when it comes to blaming Pakistan for not doing enough to contain the growing militancy, Britain and the US seem to be on the same page. President Obama's Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, told the Brussels Forum on Sunday that the people who had planned 9/11, killed Ms Bhutto and committed terrorism in Mumbai, were in Pakistan. The observation comes at a time when America's new policy towards Pakistan and Afghanistan is about to be unveiled..."

"New Allegations About the Presence of Terrorists," an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (03/24)  
"American authorities' stance that there are no terrorists in Afghanistan and that all terrorists are operating from Pakistani soil cannot be accepted. A large number of terrorists are present in Afghanistan as well; and NATO forces should launch operations against them. But what is happening is that instead of controlling terrorists [in Afghanistan], NATO officials heap all the blame on Pakistan."

"President Obama's Criticism Of Bush Policy" an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ. 5000) (03/24)  
"In a TV interview, President Obama has strongly criticized former Vice President Cheney and termed Bush administration's policy on Guantanamo unacceptable... President Obama has termed Guantanamo and other detention centers as unnecessary. The world feels a soft corner for Obama after hearing these views. However, America's image will not improve until President Obama's views become policy, and a source of satisfaction for weaker and underdeveloped countries."

"America's new policy of aligning with extremist," an op-ed by a women activist Irfana Mallah in Hyderabad based liberal and independent Sindhi daily "Kawish" (Cir. 105,000) (03/24)

"Ambassador Patterson's meetings with Nawaz Sharif in Raiwind were not aimed at restoration of the Chief Justice Chaudhary, or protecting the democratic system, but they were part of the Obama administration's new policy of bridging the gap with extremists, so that these could be used to control Taliban and other such elements."

Patterson